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# More about the Performance History of Macbeth

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## More about the Performance History of Macbeth

### **Keywords**

Giuseppe Verdi, Macbeth

## More about the Performance History of *Macbeth*

One of the unusual features of the *Macbeth Sourcebook* (New York, 1984; see back cover for special discounts to Institute members) is a list of *Macbeth* performances from its premiere in Florence, March of 1847, to 1947 with an additional listing of five 20th century revivals of *Macbeth* I. Below are some corrections and additions to that list by the person most responsible for the original listing, Institute member Thomas Kaufman. In the introduction to the appendix of the *Sourcebook*, entitled "A Hundred Years of *Macbeth*," the statement was made "the first production specifically identified as *Macbeth* 'nuovo' in the royalty statements Ricordi sent to Verdi is that of Modena 1874 (immediately after its Italian premiere at La Scala).<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, when Ricordi sent out performing material, it was in all likelihood of the revised version." (Introduction signed by Andrew Porter.) At the time I argued against including this last sentence, and now Mr. Kaufman agrees that the evidence suggests, in fact, that aside from La Scala, Modena, and the failed Parisian premiere (1865), there were few, if any, performances of the revised *Macbeth* until after the First World War. That evidence consists of a group of librettos in the Verdi Archive used at performances of *Macbeth* in Italy and the Iberian

peninsula from 1865 (Venice, Dec. 26) to 1911 (Rome, March 11) and a series of generic librettos published by Ricordi between those dates which are of the original version. In addition, each of the ten MS copies of the orchestral score gathered by the Institute is of the first version. Were performances of the second version common, there would be evidence of that fact in the form of librettos for specific performances or rental scores; and we have been unable to find any.

The revision of *Macbeth* appears to resemble then *Jérusalem*, a revision of *I Lombardi* for Paris in 1847, which was a failure in Italy when translated into Italian and for precisely the same reason. In each case, audiences knew, loved, indeed preferred the original. The one significant difference between the performance histories of the two works is that *Jérusalem* had a fair amount of success in Paris and other French cities, or French-speaking cities such as Brussels and New Orleans. The revised *Macbeth* did not.

Attending performances of the original *Macbeth* has convinced a number of us that Verdi actually harmed the drama in his revision of the last act. Perhaps the most successful arrangement for modern audiences would be performances of Acts I-III of the revised version together with Act IV of the original. I would like very much to attend such a performance.

Martin Chusid

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<sup>1</sup>The staging in Modena actually took place in 1875 about a year after the Scala performance.

Date	City	Theatre	Lady Macbeth	Macbeth	Banquo	Macduff
1850 May 29	Vienna <sup>1</sup>	Kärntnerthor	Burde-Ney			
1853 Nov 15	Catania <sup>2</sup>	Comunale	Zudoli	Pacini	Bonsignori	Lelmi
1854 Jan 11	Copenhagen <sup>3</sup>	Royal	Gaziello-Brambilla	Reina	Mirandola	Bianchi
1858 Apr 24	Vera Cruz? <sup>4</sup> Guadalajara? <sup>4</sup> Guanajuato? <sup>4</sup> Buenos Aires <sup>5</sup>	Colon	La Grua	Casanova		
1860 Feb 28 Sept 8	Amsterdam <sup>6</sup> Melbourne <sup>7</sup>	Stadsx Th. Royal	Devries Bianchi	Marra Coulon	Bianchi Gregg	Danieli Bianchi
1865 March 20	Constantinople <sup>8</sup>	Naum	Gianfredi	Mari		
1867 Feb 23	Constantinople <sup>9</sup>	Naum	Ronzi-Cecchi	Cottone		
1869 March 14? Nov 20?	Valladolid <sup>10</sup> Gibraltar <sup>11</sup>	Calderon	Gianfredi Ruggero-Antonioli	Grandi Prattico	Mazzarini	
1872 April 14 May 23	Guadalajara <sup>12</sup> Melbourne <sup>13</sup>	Degollada Princess	Visconti Zenoni	Ottaviani Coliva	Donci	Coy
1873 July 28	Adelaide <sup>14</sup>	Tn. Royal	Zenoni	Coliva	Donci	Coy
1875 Jan 17 Mar 20 June 3	Manila <sup>15</sup> Catania <sup>16</sup> Constantinople <sup>17</sup>	Circo Comunale Croissant	Arancio-Guerrini Pitarch Musconi	Rossi Capocci/Medini Grandi	Garcia Cesaro Ciccotti	Vistarini/Forapan Belfiore Bocchino



1921 Oct 15	Stockholm <sup>18</sup>	Royal	Althen	Richter	Andresen	
1931 Oct 13	Berlin <sup>19</sup>	Stadtoper	Onegin	Reinmar		
1932 Jan 23 May 31	Frankfurt <sup>20</sup> Berlin <sup>19</sup>	Opernhaus Stadtoper	Gentner-Fischer Bindernagel	Stern Reinmar	Andresen	
1933 April 28 Nov 8	Vienna <sup>21</sup> Berlin <sup>19</sup>	Staatsoper Stadtoper	Ruenger Onegin	Jerger Reinmar	Mayr Andresen	Kalenberg
1935 Nov 30	Prague <sup>22</sup>	Neues Deutsches	Pauly	Schwarz	Guttmann	Fischer

1. *Wiener Zeitung*, May 29, 1850, p.1662.

2. D. Danzuso and G. Idonea. *Musica, Musicisti e Teatro in Catania*. Palermo, 1985, p.402.

3. G. Schepelern *Italienerne Paa Hofteateret*, Copenhagen, 1976, p.316. This corrects the entry for Dec 1853 which should be removed.

4. Several Italian theatrical newspapers refer to a tour of Mexico taken by the Roncari company, which had given *Macbeth* in Mexico city on Dec 1, 1857. This company first went to Vera Cruz, where there is no published record of a *Macbeth*, although the work may well have been given. Then, according to a letter published in *Cosmorama Pittorico*, Milan, Oct 2, 1858, p.280, the company went to Guanajuato and Guadalajara, where they gave a number of operas including *Macbeth*. The letter further states that most of the performances in Guadalajara were concerts rather than operas, thus a performance in Guadalajara has to be regarded as less likely than one in Guanajuato. Unfortunately, correspondence of this type is rarely specific as to what opera was given in what city, and often contradictory.

5. *La Reforma Pacifico*, Buenos Aires, April 24, 1858.

6. The performance of Feb 28 was announced in the *Nieuwe Amsterdamche Courant*, Amsterdam, Feb 27, 1860, p.6, but not reviewed. Another performance on March 1 was reviewed on March 3, p.5. At the time, the principal theatre in Amsterdam (referred to as the National in Italian theatrical journals) was locally listed as the Stads Schouwburg. The original entry for March 8 should be deleted.

7. *Melbourne Argus*, Melbourne, 1860, various issues.

8. *Levant Herald*, March 29, 1865, p.70.

9. *Levant Herald*, Constantinople, Feb 27, 1867, p.13.

10. *Rivista Teatrale Melodrammatica*, Milan, March 22, 1869, p.3.

11. *Rivista Teatrale Melodrammatica*, Milan, Dec 1, 1869, p.3.
12. This corrects a typographical error in the original list, where all the entries were inadvertently moved over one column to the right.
13. Announced *Melbourne Argus*, Melbourne, May 22, 1872, p.8; reviewed May 26, p.6.
14. Announced *South Australian Register*, Adelaide, July 28, 1873, p.1; reviewed July 29, p.5.
15. Announced *El Comercio*, Manila, Jan 13, 1875, p.4; reviewed Jan 18, p.1.
16. D. Danzuso and G. Idonea. *Musica, Musicisti e Teatro in Catania*. Palermo, 1985, p.406.
17. Announced *Levant Herald*, Constantinople, June 3, 1875, p.419; reviewed June 5, p.427.
18. Reviewed *Aftonbladet*, Oct 16, 1921, p.6.
19. These three entries are listed in a manuscript chronology of the Berlin opera houses prepared by an operagoer which was kindly furnished to me by Mr. Charles Mintzer. It has not yet been possible to confirm them in the local press.
20. Albert Richard Mohr. *Das Frankfurter Opernhaus*. Frankfurt, 1980, p.244.
21. *Wiener Zeitung*, April 30, 1933, p.11. It appears likely that the entry for April 28, 1934 in the original listing was an error, although the opera was given in Vienna that year.
22. Announced *Praeger Presse*, Nov 29, 1935, p.8; reviewed Dec 3, p.5.